

Message Text

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SEC AIR FORCE WASHDC

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UNCLAS BRUSSELS 03084

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - ADDITION OF E.O. TAGS ETC

E.O. 1152: NA

TAGS: MASS, BE

SUBJECT: BELGIA COMMENT ON F-104 REPLACEMENT

1. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH DIMANCHE-PRESSE. GUY CUDELL, PRESIDENT OF DE DEFENSE COMMITTEE OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES STRESSES THE NEED TO REPLACE THE F-104, ALTHOUGH HE QUESTIONS THE TIMELINESS OF SUCH A DECISION, RECALLING THE SOCIALIST PROPOSAL TO POSTPONE IT. HE ALSO EMPHASIZES THE NEED TO BUY EUROPEAN. FOR THE FRENCH F-1 IS ONLY ONLY FRENCH. THE AERONAUTICS INDUSTRIES OF SEVERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH IT. WON'T THE PURCHASE OF AMERICAN PLANES RECOGNIZE THE QUASI-MONOPOLY OF AMERICAN MILITARY AERONAUTICS CONSTRUCTN, AFTER THE QUASI-MONOPOLY OF AMERICAN CIVILIAN AERONAUTICS CONSTRUCTION? IS IT ADVISABLE FOR EUROPE TO DEPEND ENTIRELY ON THE US IN THE FIELD OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY AERONAUTICS? I DO NOT BELIEVE IT. THIS IS WHY I HAVE DEPLORED THAT THE BRITISH, ITALIAN AND GERMAN PROJECT OF MCRA PLANE, WHICH IS SO EXPENSIVE THAT SMALL COUNTRIES LIKE OURS CANNOT UNCLASSIFIED

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THINK OF ASSOCIATING THEMSELVES TO IT, NOR TO PAY FOR IT, HAS NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL. THIS IS WHY, ALSO, VERY RECENTLY I HAD HOPED THAT AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SWEDES AND THE FRENCH WOULD HAVE MADE IT POSSIBLE TO BREAK DOWN THE ORDER OF 350

PLANES BETWEEN EUROPE OF THE NINE AND SWEDEN. PROCLAIMING ONESELF EUROPEAN IS NOT ENOUGH. EUROPE WILL BE MADE AMONG OTHER THINGS THROUGH EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN THE ECONOMICS FIELD. IN THIS CASE, BUYING AMERICAN IS NOT MAKING EUROPE... THIS BEING SAID, FROM AN OPERATIONS VIEWPOINT, THE AMERICAN PLANE AND THE FRENCH PLANE ARE COMPARABLE, EVEN THOUGH ACCORDING TO EXPERTS, THEY HAVE A DIFFERENT BEHAVIOR CHARACTERISTICS ACCORDING TO THE ALTITUDE. FROM THE TECHNICAL VIEWPOINT, THE AIRFRAME OF THE AMERICAN F-16 IS MORE MODERN, THANKS TO THE ALLOYS USED, WHEREAS THE FRENCH ENGINE IS MORE RECENT, WHICH IS NOT NECESSARILY AN ADVANTAGE. " ABOUT THE SEVEN PER CENT PRICE DIFFERENCE, CUDELL SAYS THAT "IT MUST BE ADMITTED THAT IT IS AN IMPORTANT ARGUMENT. IT SEEMS, HOWEVER, -- AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TO GIVE CLEAR EXPLANATIONS IN THIS RESPECT -- THAT THE FRENCH PROPOSALS ARE MORE ADVANTAGEOUS FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF ECONOMIC COMPENSATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN THE ESSENTIAL FIELD OF COPRODUCTIONS. I WOULD LIKE TO UNDERLINE HERE THAT IT WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE THAT THE FINAL CHOICE, WHATEVER IT MAY BE, NOT BE ACCOMPANIED BY REAL AND INDISPUTABLE GUARANTEES FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF COMPENSATIONS AND OF COPRODUCTION... THE EXPERIENCE OF THE RECENT PURCHASE OF C-130S FOR THE TRANSPORT SQUADRON SHOULD NOT BE REPEATED..."

2. L'ECHO DE LA BOURSE (DATED FRIDAY 4 TO SUNDAY APRIL 6) DISCUSSES THE COMMUNIQUE OF THE DEF. MIN. ITS HEADING READS: "COMMON CHOICE FOR THE YF-16 OR MIRAGE FOR BELGIUM ALONE." PAPER THINKS THAT THE "SMALL SENTENCE" ON THE ECONOMICAL AND INDUSTRIAL ASPECTS STILL UNDER STUDY " CAN HAVE TWO AIMS. ON ONE HAND, IT ALLOWS BELGIUM TO CONSIDER THAT THE FRENCH ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL OFFERS COMPENSATE FOR THE QUALITATIVE AND FINANCIAL SUPERIORITY OF THE AMERICAN PLANE BUT IT CAN ALSO REPRESENT A MANEUVER -- WHICH WOULD THEN BE DIRECTED BY THE DUTCH -- TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL COMPENSATIONS FROM THE AMERICANS." COMMENTING ON CHIRAC'S REMARK THAT THE CHOICE OF THE FOUR COUNTRIES WILL BE A TEST OF POLITICAL WILL FOR EUROPE, THE PAPER WRITES: "UNFORTUNATELY, IT MUST BE SAID THAT ONCE AGAIN, THE FRENCH MAKE A TEST ONLY OF THE OTHERS' ACTIONS. THEY CONSIDER THEIR EUROPEAN CALLING AS AXIOMATIC, WHILE SUGGESTING THAT THE OTHERS MUST ALWAYS PROVE THEIRS... THE 'GOOD AND BAD ONES' ATTITUDE OF THE UNCLASSIFIED

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FRENCH IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY UNBEARABLE.. THIS BEING SAID... IT IS BEYOND ANY DOUBT THAT THE CHOICE OF AN AMERICAN PLANE WILL REPRESENT A VERY SERIOUS BLOW TO THE EUROPEAN AERONAUTICS INDUSTRY. IT IS PERHAPS EXCESSIVE TO SAY, AS SOME DO NOT FAIL TO DO, THAT THE BLOW WOULD BE DEADLY. EVEN AT DASSAULT'S WE WERE TOLD LAST YEAR THAT THE 'DEAL OF THE CENTURY' WAS NOT VITAL FOR THE FRENCH COMPANY...." PAPER ALSO WRITES THAT "THE FRENCH WILL PROBABLY NOT BE ABLE TO IMPROVE THEIR OFFER....THE AMERICANS ON OTHER HAND, STILL HAVE P POSSIBILITIES, PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF EXCHANGE RATE GUARANTEES WHICH WAS RECENTLY THE OCCASION OF POLEMICS BETWEEN BELGIUM AND THE NETHERLANDS."R

3. GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN COMMENTS BN CKDELL' STATEMENTS THAT

"CUDELL'S PLEA, JUST LIKE THE NOTE PUBLISHED BY DASSAULT, CAN ONLY CONTRIBUTE TO CREATING CONFUSION IN PUBLIC OPINION. IT IS EVEN MORE THAN LIKELY THAT HIS VIEW IS NOT SHARED BY THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY ESPECIALLY WHEN CONSIDERING THAT FN, IN THE POWERFUL LIEGE BASTION, EXPECTS EXACTLY THE DOUBLE FROM PARTICIPATION IN THE AMERICAN PROGRAM THAN FROM THE POSSIBLE MIRAGE PROGRAM.

WHEN HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT EMPLOYMENT, MR. CUDELL MOREOVER MUST KNOW THAT PROSPECTS WITH THE F-16 ARE MUCH GREATER THAN WITH THE FRENCH COMPETITOR, JUST AS HE MUST BE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT IN ORDER TO MAKE POSSIBLE THE REPLACEMENT OF THE STARFIGHTERS AS OF 1978# THE DECISION HAS NOW BECOME URGENT... FOR HIS 'EUROPEAN,' ARGUMENT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE CANNOT EVEN COUNT ON THE SUPPORT OF THE FRENCH AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE, WHICH SEEMS MORE INTERESTED IN A STABLE PRODUCTION OF CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT THAN IN A MILITARY PRODUCTION WHICH IS STRONGLY SUBJECT TO FLUCTUATIONS. IN ADDITION THE EUROPEAN ARGUMENT REMAINS VERY WEAK SO LONG AS ONE CONTINUES TO CONFOUND 'FRANCE' WITH 'EUROPE'".

4. EMIEL VAN CAUWELAERT WRITES IN HET VOLK: " CUDELL CAN BE RIGHT AS FAR AS ECONOMIC COMPENSATIONS ARE CONCERNED. IT IS UP TO THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE A JUDGMENT ABOUT THAT. AS FAR AS THE FRENCH SOLIDARITY WITH EUROPE AND NATO IS CONCERNED, A NUMBER OF QUESTION MARKS ARE IN ORDER HERE. UNLESS GISCARD D'ESTAING OFFERS MORE GUARANTEES THAN HIS TWO EMINENT PREDECESSORS." VAN CAUWELAERT FURTHER WONDER WHETHER CUDELL IS STILL THE RIGHT MAN IN THE RIGHT PLACE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE AFTER UNCLASSIFIED

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HAVING TAKEN THE STAND HE DID TAKE. HE CONCLUDES, " WE FEAR MOREOVER THAT PREPARATIONS ARE BEING MADE TO GRAFT A COMMUNITY APPLE OF DISCORD UPON THE PLANE QUESTION: THE FRANCOPHONES IN FAVOR OF THE MIRAGE, THE DUTCH-SPEAKING FOR THE AMERICAN F-16. THAT WOULD BEAT ALL. PERHAPS ONE COULD EQUIP THE WILLOW PILOT WITH A MIRAGE AND THE FLEMISH PILOTS WITH AN F 16. FOR IN BELGIUM THE PEAR IS ALWAYS CUT INTO TWO PIECES. THE RESPECTIVE ECONOMIC COMPENSATIONS CAN THEN ALSO BE DIVIDED IT IS BUT A SUGGESTION..."

5. VOLKSGAZET IS OPPOSED TO WHAT IT CALLS " QUIVOCAL DEMAGOGIC CRITICISM " OF NATO AND OF THE DEFMIN VANDEN BOEYNANTS. "ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT OUR FRIEND THERE IS NO NEED FOR HIM TO BE THE SCAPEGOAT. IT IS A LITTLE CHEAP. THE REPLACEMENT OF FIGHTER PLANES IS APPARENTLY AN UNAVOIDABLE POLITICAL DECISION BY NOW, BUT THE DISCUSSION SHOULD BE HELD IN OPENNESS AND IN PARLIAMENT". PAPER FURTHER WRITES THAT " WE WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE THE ANTI-MILITARIST TREND BURIED UNDER ALL KINDS OF OPPORTUNISTIC FALLACIES", ONE OF THESE ACCORDING TO THE PAPER BEING THE ECONOMIC COMPENSATIONS OFFERED ON ALL SIDES. FIRESTONE

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